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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6499

INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4228

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1785

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0357

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 8118

RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA PRIORITY 7882

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 0673

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 1470

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 9210

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY

RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI PRIORITY

RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY

RHHMUNA/COMSOC PAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEATRS/TREASURY DEPT WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: THE ELECTION MECHANICS BEHIND ABE'S LIKELY WIN

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Japan's next Prime Minister will be chosen by an election for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Presidency. On the eve of the September 20 poll, Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe has an insurmountable lead over his two opponents. This message outlines the mechanics of the LDP presidential election. Abe becomes the next LDP president and Prime Minister if he wins over 50 percent of the 703 votes that will be cast by party supporters and Diet members.

Although highly unlikely, if Abe fails to win a simple majority, there will be a run-off between the top two candidates, in which only LDP Diet members will be eligible to vote. Once elected, Abe will be eligible to serve two, three-year terms at the pleasure of the party. End Summary.

Abe Outdistancing the Pack

¶2. (SBU) The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential election will decide who will succeed Prime Minister Koizumi and, on the eve of the September 20th election, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe is almost certain to win. Politicians,

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academics and political analysts all agree that Abe has an insurmountable lead and will soundly defeat his two opponents, Foreign Minister Taro Aso and Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki. Newspaper polls reflect Abe's commanding position. Polls targeting LDP Diet members and LDP supporters (both groups will have a say in the election) show that Abe has secured over 70 percent of the Diet members' votes and over 56 percent of the votes from party supporters.

Election Committee Formalizes Schedule

¶3. (SBU) In late June, the LDP formed an 11-member Presidential Election Management Committee, which includes one "neutral" senior politician and a representative from each of the ten factions. Party rules dictate that the election must take place during the 10-day window before the

expiration of Koizumi's term (September 30) and the party must announce the election date at least 10 days before the poll. In early July, after taking "political circumstances" and diplomatic schedules into consideration, the Committee decided to officially announce the election on September 8 and set the election date for September 20.

Political Allies Count

¶4. (SBU) Candidates for the LDP presidency must be Diet members and must be nominated by at least 20 LDP Diet colleagues. The "electorate" is small; there are only 703 votes. The 403 LDP Diet members will each cast one vote. In addition, three hundred additional votes will be cast by the LDP's chapters in Japan's 47 prefectures. Each LDP prefectoral chapter received a minimum of three votes, with the remaining difference divided proportionally among the 47 chapters based on the number of registered LDP members in their prefectures (see para 9 for more detail). To be eligible to vote, a local party member must have been registered for the past two years and must be up-to-date on dues. LDP Headquarters estimates the number of eligible party members to be around 1.2 million; they expect about 1 million members to participate in the election. If a candidate wins over 50 percent of the 703 votes (352 votes), he will become the next LDP president and Prime Minister. If no candidate wins a simple majority, there will be a run-off between the top two candidates. Only the 403 LDP Diet members, however, are eligible to vote in the run-off.

Local-level "Primary"

¶5. (SBU) Each local chapter will hold a chapter-level poll

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before Election Day. The number of votes allotted by the LDP to the chapter will then be divvied up between the candidates on a proportional basis. For example, in Tokyo's ten-vote district, if, hypothetically, there were a total of 100,000 eligible voters and Candidate A won 60,000 votes, Candidate B won 30,000 and Candidate C won 10,000, then Candidate A would get six of Tokyo's 10 votes, Candidate B would get three and Candidate C would get one. Representatives from the prefectoral chapters will hand-carry their chapter's votes to an LDP meeting in Tokyo. The local chapter votes and the Diet members' votes will be tabulated at the same time.

Freedom of Choice

¶6. (SBU) The vote will be conducted by secret ballot. The breakdown of votes for each prefecture will be publicly available after Koizumi's successor is chosen. On the other hand, the LDP will publish a report detailing the number of Diet member votes cast for each candidate but will not reveal how each member voted.

Money Not an Issue

¶7. (SBU) In contrast to parliamentary elections, campaign funding has played an insignificant role in the LDP presidential election. There are no formal rules about how much money a candidate may spend, but most candidates did not spend much. The LDP provided each candidate with a campaign room in Tokyo and covered their phone bills. Some of the Diet members who endorsed a candidate seconded their assistants to work in the campaign offices and the party financed the nationwide candidate debates. Prefectoral chapters and support groups (koenkai) invited candidates to speak at meetings, and covered most of the costs associated with the visits. In fact, a veteran at LDP Headquarters told us that candidates actively avoid spending too much on their campaigns, lest they create the impression that they are

trying to buy a victory. In previous elections, candidates did pay for policy pamphlets and fashion consultants, but the majority of the costs of the election were borne by the party infrastructure.

After the Election

18. (SBU) After the election on September 20, the Diet will convene an extraordinary session. Prime Minister Koizumi will open the session on September 26 and the entire Cabinet will immediately resign en masse, compelling the Diet to elect the next Prime Minister. With a coalition majority in both houses, the new LDP President will be easily elected the next premier. The Prime Minister will name the new Cabinet that same day. There are no term limits for Japan's Prime Minister. The LDP, however, imposes a two, three-year term limit on its President thus effectively limiting the next Prime Minister's tenure.

Prefectural Chapter Votes

19. (U) The 300 chapter votes will be divided as follows:

Hokkaido (9), Aomori (5), Iwate (5), Miyagi (5), Akita (5), Yamagata (5), Fukushima (6), Ibaraki (11), Tochigi (5), Gunma (7), Saitama (8), Chiba (6), Tokyo (12), Kanagawa (9), Niigata (7), Toyama (9), Ishikawa (8), Fukui (5), Yamanashi (4), Nagano (5), Gifu (9), Shizuoka (8), Aichi (10), Mie (5), Shiga (5), Kyoto (6), Osaka (8), Hyogo (7), Nara (4), Wakayama (4), Tottori (4), Shimane (6), Okayama (6), Hiroshima (9), Yamaguchi (6), Tokushima (4), Kagawa (6), Ehime (9), Kochi (5), Fukuoka (6), Saga (5), Nagasaki (6),

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Kumamoto (6), Oita (5), Miyazaki (5), Kagoshima (7), Okinawa (3).

SCHIEFFER